



Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji

The Pioneer of Freedom & Non Co-operation Movement

NAMDHARIS

The Freedom Fighter

KUKA MARTYRS MEMORIAL TRUST
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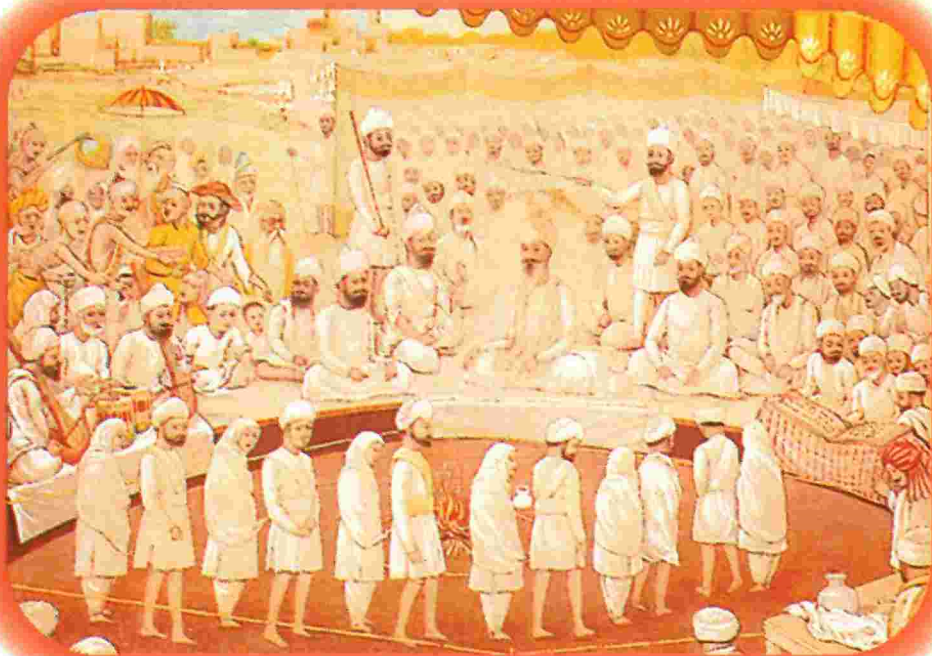
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SRI SATGURU RAM SINGH JI

The Namdhari Sikhs known as Kukas in the political annals of India are rightly called "Torch bearer of India's freedom struggle."

Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji, the master planner of freedom movement in India, founded Namdhari Sect on 12th April, 1857, at Sri Bhaini Sahib (Distt.Ludhiana, Punjab). At that time, India was under the yoke of British Empire. Simultaneously, the people of India were depressed under the evil customs of the society also.

Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji mobilized the people for the freedom of their country and against the evil customs of the society as well. He inculcated religious awareness among the people because it evokes the feeling of self-respect and sacrifices for the sake of the country. In a short period, lacs of people flocked to him and they became fully aware of their serfdom and of bondage.



(Dowryless, Inter-caste marriage system introduced by Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji)

SOCIAL REFORMS

In the 19th century, killing girl-child in infancy and her sale-purchase was a daily occurrence in India. The main cause behind these pernicious customs was the enormous burden of marriage expenses and illiteracy. Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji laid emphasis on the education of both boys and girls. He introduced a new expense-less system of mass marriages which is called "Anand Kaaraj". The dowry, marriage procession and various other formalities associated with wed-lock were stopped. The first ever intercaste mass marriages were performed on 3rd June, 1863 in village Khote distt. Ferozepur, Punjab.

Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji made every effort to give respect and equal status to women in the society.

S.Kapoor Singh I.C.S. writes in his book 'Sapat Sring',
"If we set aside all good deeds of Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji on one side which he preached for goodness of whole mankind and the country, only his

preaching for equal rights for men and women in the society take him to list of supreme reformers of the world".

The preaching of Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji, changed the feeling of public.

"When first heard of as a successor of Balak Ram (Guru Balak Singh) of Hazro, he was known as Ram Singh Mahant, afterward as Guru Ram Singh, then as Satguru Ram Singh and now as Satguru Badshah".

[Lt.Gen.Meck Andrew-DIG.Ambala Circle]

Mr.J.W.Mechab, Commissioner Ambala had mentioned in his report dt. 4.11.71. "I see in earlier papers that Ram Singh was looked upon as a successor or actual re-embodiment of Guru Nanak the sant. He is now the representative of Guru Gobind Singh the warrior".

Actually, "The object of Ram Singh and his disciples were not merely religious, but that under the guise of a religious reformer and teacher of moral precepts, he harboured deep political design."

[Mohammed Latif -History of Punjab]



(Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji with his Subas (Lieutents))

NON CO-OPERATION MOVEMENT

Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji was the pioneer and first in the world history who used Non-Co-operation as a weapon to free his country from the yokes of British Empire. It was much earlier than Mahatma Gandhi Ji talked of it.

Dr.Rajinder Parsad, the first President of India, wrote in 1935 in his article in "The Satyug".

"Guru Ram Singh believed in the political freedom as part of religion. The organisation of the Namdhari became considerably strong. The movement of Boycott and Non-Co-operation, which Mahatma Gandhi started so vigorously in our times was preached by Guru Ram Singh 50 years ago as cult for the Namdharis. Guru Ram Singh's Non-Co-operation movement contained the following five essentials :-

1. Boycott of Government service.
2. Boycott of educational institution opened by British.
3. Boycott of Law-courts started by the British.

4. *Boycott of foreign made Goods.*

5. *Refused to obey and resist the Laws & orders which owns conscience abhors.*

(Guru) Ram Singh the sikh philosopher and reformer and the first indian to use non co-operation and boycott of british merchandise and services as a

potential weapon. (Encyclopedia Britanica - Vol.8, Page 142)

It seemed that Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji had setup an independent parallel government.

Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji, set up his own postal system. Diplomatic relations were established with native states & neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Afganistan & Russia etc. In 1869-70 a seperate regiment "KOOKA PLATOON" was created in Kashmir state.

SACRIFICES

To consolidated their power, the Britishers had adopted the policy of dividing the population on religion and communal basis. They first issued orders that

"No one should be allowed to interfere with the practice by his neighbour and of customs, which that neighbours religion either enjoins or permits".

Then Muslims were encouraged to practice cow killing. This was totally against the religious practices and sentiments of Hindus and Sikhs. Namdhari Sikhs understood the policy of British Government.

Namdharis revolted against British Rule. They raided the slaughter house at Amritsar on 15th June, 1871 and then Raikot on 15th July, 1871. The British Government reacted quickly. But could not able to arrest the real persons who had raided the slaughter houses.

As per British Govt. document No. 1060, Dated 10/09/1871, "No evidence was available in the case, till on the order of the (Guru) Ram Singh, the real culprits (Namdhari) presented themselves before the judge".

Three Namdharis were hanged on 5th August 1871 at Raikot, four at Amritsar on 15th September 1871 and two at Ludhiana on 26th November, 1871.



(Namdhari Sikhs putting the silky string around their necks themselves at Amritsar on 15th September, 1871)

KUKA MASSACRE AT MALERKOTLA

Under the leadership of S.Hira Singh and S.Lehna Singh, Namdhari Sikhs attacked Malerkotla on 15th January, 1872. There was a fierce fighting. The Kukas fought bravely, persons from both the sides were killed. S.Hira Singh also lost his left arm. In the evening, this group of Namdharis went to village Rarh. S. Hira Singh addressed the group,

"We had achieved our target. We had conveyed our feelings to the British Government that now the Indians had woken up. They would neither tolerate foreign rule nor hurt to their religious sentiments and self respect".

Then all of them resolved to surrender before the authority. At that time the ruler of Malerkotla State was a minor. Mr.Cowen was working as a Superintendent of the Council of Administration. He immediately sent the force to bring all the arrested Namdharis revolutionists to Malerkotla parade ground. He had got nine cannons from neighbouring state. He had made up his mind to blow all the rebels Namdharis with cannons who had attacked Malerkotla. It was evening of 17th Jan. 1871, when the brave Namdharis reached the parade ground of Malerkotla. Now a days this ground is known as "Kukian da Shaheedi Rakkar".

Mr.Cowen conducted no trial. Even the name of persons were not recorded. He immediately ordered to tie the rebels Namdharis to the cannon's mouth. But the Namdharis refused saying "They would come to the cannons mouth themselves turn by turn". Once again Mr.Cowen proposed them to stand with their backs to the cannons. But again the Kukas replied that only the cowards die a death by receiving the shots on the backs. They would die a brave death getting the shots in their chests. Before order to shoot, Mr.Cowen questioned group leader S.Hira Singh, 'Why they had attacked Malerkotla ?'. S.Hira Singh replied very firmly and boldly,

"We want rule of their our brothers.....your justice is lie. Your death and down fall is near.....We shall be born again, hold the sword in our own hands and wage a war which will destroy your rule."

Then seven cannons were set to fire and seven were blown. Seven times the seven cannons were set to fire and all the times seven Namdharis i.e. 49 in total bestowed their lives for the independence of India. A young boy of twelve, Bishan Singh was asked by Mr. & Mrs. Cowen to renunciate Guru Ram Singh Ji and Namdharism to save his life. As soon as Bishan Singh heard these words which insulted his master, his eyes became balls of fire. Like a lion, with a leap he pounced on Mr.Cowen and caught hold of his beard and pulled it so hard that Mr.Cowen's life was put in danger.

Mr.Cowen wrote about this incident as,

"One man escaped from the guards and made a furious attack on me, seizing me by the beard and endeavouring to strangle me and as he was a very powerful man. I had a considerable difficulty in releasing myself".

Mr.Cowen was saved by native officers who cut the hands & head of Bishan Singh with their swords. Next day, on 18th January, 16 more Namdharis were blown off with the cannons. On this day, S. Waryam Singh was rather short. He was asked to go back as he fallen short of cannon range. As a matter of fact, he was related to the Maharaja of Patiala, so Warayam Singh was asked to go back. Warayam Singh ran at once, brought some pebbles and sods of earth from the nearby fields and prepared a small platform. Standing upon it, he challanged the gunman to fire as his height was now match with the level of cannon's mouth.



(S.Warayam Singh at the time of executions in Maler Kotla on 18th Jan.1872)

Mr.Henry Cotton writes in his book "Indian and Home Memories",

"These reminiscences of 1872, would be incomplete without some reference to what can I only describe as the massacre of Malerkotla.....for my part I can recall nothing during my service in India more revolting and shocking than these execution".

Actually, it was the only inhuman and illegal action of its kind in the history.

'The friend of India', on 1st February 1872, strongly protested and wrote, "We protest, without waiting for official documents, against the wholesale military execution ordered by Mr. Deputy Commissioner Cowen".

NAMDHRI SIKHS ARE SEDIATORS

The government was waiting since long time for an appropriate opportunity. The government took this occasion of Malerkotla as affording an opportunity for exercising its absolute power for crushing the Namdhari Sikhs. Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji and prominent Subas were arrested and exiled.



(Shri Satguru Ram Singh Ji exiled to Burma from Calcutta Port in March 1872)

The residence of Sri Satguru Ram Singh Ji, now called Gurudwara Sri Bhaini Sahib, (Distt. Ludhiana, Punjab) was raided by the police. A strong police post was stationed at the main gate of (Gurudwara Sri Bhaini Sahib), which remained there for 51 years. Namdharis were ordered not to hold meeting and leave place of their residence without informing the police or village head. More than five Namdhari Sikhs could not assemble at a place. The whole Namdhari community was treated like seditors. Hundreds of Namdhari Sikhs were sent to jails or deported to Andemann Island and their properties were seized. But Namdharis were undaunted by rigorous imprisoned life and the prosecution of the police. They continuously fought for the freedom of India under the benign & inspiring guidance of Satguru Hari Singh Ji & Satguru Partap Singh Ji.

"The truth is that it is not possible for a kuka to be loyal subject of the British Government," (In **"Ludhiana District Gazetteer-1904"**)

In the mean time, Indian National Congress had been organised. Namdhari Sikhs joined hands with the Congress. They organised number of conferences at various places in Punjab to arouse the people against the British tyranny. In 1925, the congress started a special campaign from Bradella Hall in Lahore. Namdharis participated in this movement fully, stood at the forefront and faced arrests. In Dec. 1929 Annual Session of congress was organised in Lahore. Namdhari Sikhs had not only taken part in the session but also provided free food to every participant.

The Daily Tribune, Lahore published a news on 27.12.1929,

"Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was riding a horse. It was a beautiful white charger. Behind him were the G.O.C. and other officers of the volunteers corps. The most striking feature was the Sikh cavalry dressed in white spotless khadi and wearing stylish turbans. The Namdharis with their flowing beards presenting a thrilling sight."

At State people Conference on 17th Feb. 1939 in Ludhiana, a great procession was organised in protest of British rule in India. Pt.Nehru was heading this procession. It was Namdhari whose number was impressing the procession. When Netaji Subash Chandra Bose organised the AZAD HIND FAUJ with its centre in Bagkok (Thailand), Namdharis of Thailand help him all the way.

Subash Chandra Bose said that,

"The banner for freedom given to Indians by Satguru Ram Singh and the sacrifices done by Namdhari Sikhs will be a matter of great pride for the Indians. The Namdhari Sikhs, experienced for three quarters of century for their peaceful non-co-operation movement, are expected to carry forward the banner of freedom in the forefront and will encourage sacrifices. Guru Ram Singh is the first leader of the peaceful non-co-operation movement in India."

In 1945, Vavel Conference was held in Shimla. All the patriots and political parties participated in the conference. Sri Satguru Partap Singh Ji, also reached Shimla with Namdhari Sikhs. Pt.Nehru asked Sri Satguru Ji, 'What do you want ? What are your dreams ?'

"My want, wish and demand is only India's freedom'.

On account of these pioneering efforts & sacrifices of Namdharis and all other patriotic forces, India attained independence on 15th August, 1947.

Pt.Nehru had written in the 'Satyug'.

"No Indian can deny the importance of efforts put in by Satguru Ram Singh and his followers Namdhari Sikhs, seventy five years ago in achieving freedom of the country. Congress merely followed the path shown by them and attained Independence."

Now, Sri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji is inculcating religious awareness to evoke the patriotic feelings to work for the unity and integrity of the country, love and affection towards down-trodden, peace and prosperity of the mankind all over the world.

